

June 8, 2023

Via Email

Honourable Jean -Yves Duclos
Minister of Health, Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Jean-yves.duclos@parl.gc.ca

Dear Honourable Minister Duclos:

Re: Support for Bill S-254, an Act to amend the Food and Drug Act (warning labels on alcoholic beverages)

On April 26, 2023, the Board of Health for Algoma Public Health (APH), the local public health agency for the District of Algoma in Ontario, received information on alcohol-related harms and the newly released Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, which outlines the current evidence linking alcohol to many health conditions and aims to help people make informed decisions about their alcohol consumption. At this time, a motion was passed to endorse Bill S-254 – An Act to Amend the Food and Drug Act (Warning Labels on Alcoholic Beverages), which calls on the federal government of Canada to implement alcohol warning labels.⁽¹⁾

The Board of Health for Algoma Public Health is asking the federal government to express support for Bill S-254, by implementing alcohol warning labels that:

1. Indicate the volume that constitutes a standard drink; and
2. Detail the number of standard drinks in the beverage container; and
3. Display health messages regarding the relationship between the number of standard drinks consumed and health outcomes, including the risk of cancer.

More than 75% of Canadians report consuming alcohol, and only 28% of Canadians are aware of the linkage between alcohol and cancer.⁽²⁾ When asked if warning labels on alcoholic beverages would change behaviour, two-thirds of those surveyed said they would decrease their consumption with this knowledge.⁽²⁾ In Algoma, over 1 in 4 residents drink heavily and breast and colorectal cancers are more frequently diagnosed, compared to Ontario.⁽³⁾ APH's Board of Health is committed to influencing the development and implementation of healthy policies and programs related to alcohol and other drugs, with a goal of reducing harms associated with substance use.

Blind River
P.O. Box 194
9B Lawton Street
Blind River, ON P0R 1B0
Tel: 705-356-2551
TF: 1 (888) 356-2551
Fax: 705-356-2494

Elliot Lake
ELNOS Building
302-31 Nova Scotia Walk
Elliot Lake, ON P5A 1Y9
Tel: 705-848-2314
TF: 1 (877) 748-2314
Fax: 705-848-1911

Sault Ste. Marie
294 Willow Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 0A9
Tel: 705-942-4646
TF: 1 (866) 892-0172
Fax: 705-759-1534

Wawa
18 Ganley Street
Wawa, ON P0S 1K0
Tel: 705-856-7208
TF: 1 (888) 211-8074
Fax: 705-856-1752

Bill S-254 aligns with the recent call to action in Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, regarding mandatory labelling on alcoholic beverages, including the number of standard drinks in a container, risk levels from Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, and health warnings.⁽¹⁾ In Canada, tobacco and cannabis products, two other legally regulated substances, are already subject to mandatory warning labels under the Tobacco and Vaping Products and Cannabis Acts, which have been found to be among the most direct and prominent means of communicating with smokers.⁽⁴⁾ In the same way that packaging and health warnings on tobacco products were used as part of a broader public health approach to reducing tobacco-related harms, labels on alcoholic beverages can help people make informed choices about their alcohol consumption, and raise awareness of alcohol-related harms.

We ask for your support of Bill S-254 and the implementation of federally mandated labels on all alcohol containers sold in Canada, to better inform Canadians about the health risks of alcohol. This is especially important given that the majority of Canadians are unaware that alcohol is classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a Class 1 carcinogen and is a cause of 7 different types of cancer, including breast and colon.⁽⁵⁾

Thank you for your consideration in advocating for improved health of Canadians.



Sally Hagman
Chair, Board of Health,

cc: Dr. J. Loo, Medical Officer of Health and CEO for Algoma Public Health
The Honorable Senator Patrick Brazeau
Local Councils
Local MPs
The Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health